



**NTSB**

# ***SAFETY ALERT***

National Transportation Safety Board

## **★ 15-Passenger Vans**

***Follow these safety precautions if you own or ride in a 15-passenger van***

### ***The grim facts:***

- Between 1990 and 2001, the government reported 1,441 fatal crashes involving 15-passenger vans.
- A total of 601 of these were single-vehicle crashes; 316 of the vehicles rolled over.
- In 2001 alone, 130 occupants of 15-passenger vans died in crashes involving these vehicles.
- There were about 500,000 registered 15-passenger vans in 2001, an increase of more than 280 percent since 1990.
- Large vans are frequently used to transport college and other school sports teams, commuters, students, day care children, the elderly, and church groups.
- Half of the 15-passenger vans involved in single-vehicle accidents roll over, compared with one-third of passenger cars.
- Eighty-one percent of 15-passenger van deaths occur in single-vehicle rollover accidents.
- A major problem with 15-passenger vans is that their tires are often under-inflated, leading to higher tire temperatures, faster tire deterioration, and diminished driving stability.
- Adding passengers and cargo causes the center of gravity to move upward and rearward, increasing a vehicle's tendency to roll over and increasing the potential for the driver to lose control in emergency maneuvers.
- Fifteen-passenger vans are 3 times more likely to roll over when loaded with more than 10 passengers.
- In just two 15-passenger-van crashes alone in Virginia and Texas in 2001, a teenager and four senior citizens died when the left rear tires failed, the drivers lost control of the vehicles, and the vans rolled over several times.

### ***What can you do to make a trip in a 15-passenger van safer?***

**Highway safety experts at the National Transportation Safety Board strongly suggest you use the following safety tips and pass along this information to any organizations that use 15-passenger vans:**

- Wear seat belts! Keep all seat belts accessible and require that all passengers use them. NTSB accident investigations show that several of the van passengers who died might not have lost their lives if they had been wearing seat belts. They were ejected from the 15-passenger vans when the vehicles rolled over.
- Inspect seat belts and replace missing buckles, as well as broken and worn belts. Seat belts are often forgotten when they are out of sight and wedged between the seat bottom and seat back.
- Check the tire pressure often and make sure it conforms to the van and tire manufacturer's standards.

- Be aware that front and back tires may require different inflation pressures and that these pressures may be higher than the tires on passenger cars. The manufacturer's recommended pressure is usually on the driver's doorsill or in the tire owner's manual.
- Always check the condition of tires. Examine tires for uneven wear, cracks, and damage, and replace them if necessary. Many of these 15-passenger vans are not continuously driven like the family car. Exposure to sunlight and sitting parked for long periods can lead to deadly tire degradation and dry rot.
- It is critical to remember that low mileage doesn't mean tires are safe. Unfortunately, dangerously deteriorated tires cannot always be detected by visual inspection alone.
- Van drivers need additional training since these vans handle differently than other vehicles, especially when they are fully loaded.
- In emergencies, vans react differently than your family car. Make all drivers of these vans aware that the handling characteristics of vans are different, especially during an emergency like a tire blow out.
- Do not overload 15-passenger vans, and do not use a roof rack. As the weight inside a van increases, so does the van's propensity for rollover.

### ***Need more information?***

Visit the NTSB Web site at [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov).